

# 2019 Community Engagement Conference

Partnering for a Resilient and Sustainable Future



## Engaging the Community: Empathizing with Refugees through Art Museum Interpretation

- **Presenter: Hilary Katz** – master of arts student; Ohio State Department of Arts Administration, Education, and Policy; former Education Fellow at Dublin Arts Council



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

# Engaging the Community: Empathizing with Refugees through Art Museum Interpretation

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Community Engagement Conference

# Presentation Objectives

- How does your organization engage with communities without in-person facilitation?
- How can text and other forms of engagement appeal to the community?
- How can your organization allow the community's voice to permeate?

# What is interpretation?

- Wall labels
- Seating
- Methods to encourage deeper engagement
- Text read or image viewed by the public

# What is interpretation?



Digital Interactive: *Create, Connect, Contemplate*.  
Dublin Arts Council, *Crossing Borders*. 2018.



# Case Study

- **Exhibition:** *The Columbus Crossing Borders Project*
- **Exhibition themes:**
  - Understanding of and compassion for refugees
  - The challenges and rewards of “border crossings”
- **Location:** Dublin Arts Council
- **Date:** Summer 2018



# Interpretation Strategies

- Participatory Design
- New Media
- Analog Interactives



# Goals of Interpretation Strategies

- Increased accessibility
- Break down barriers
- Multiple perspectives
- Equalize and empower voices
- Possible social change

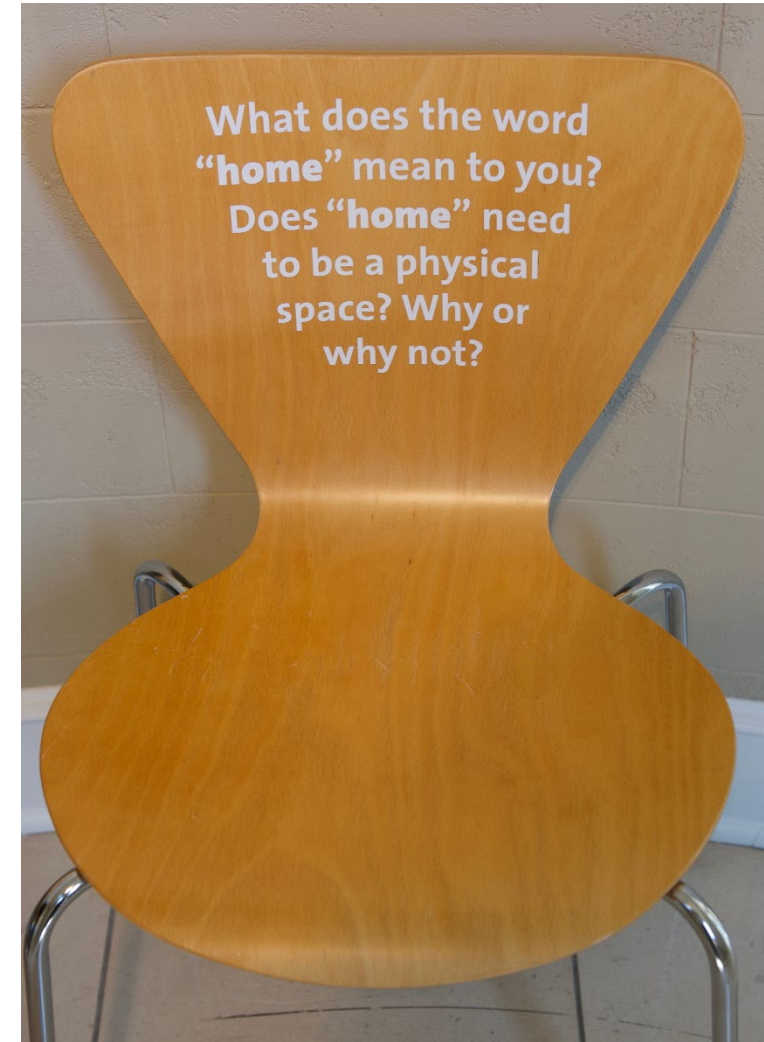


# Strategy 1: Participatory Design

Conversation Starters: Chairs & Bowls.  
Dublin Arts Council, *Crossing Borders*. 2018.



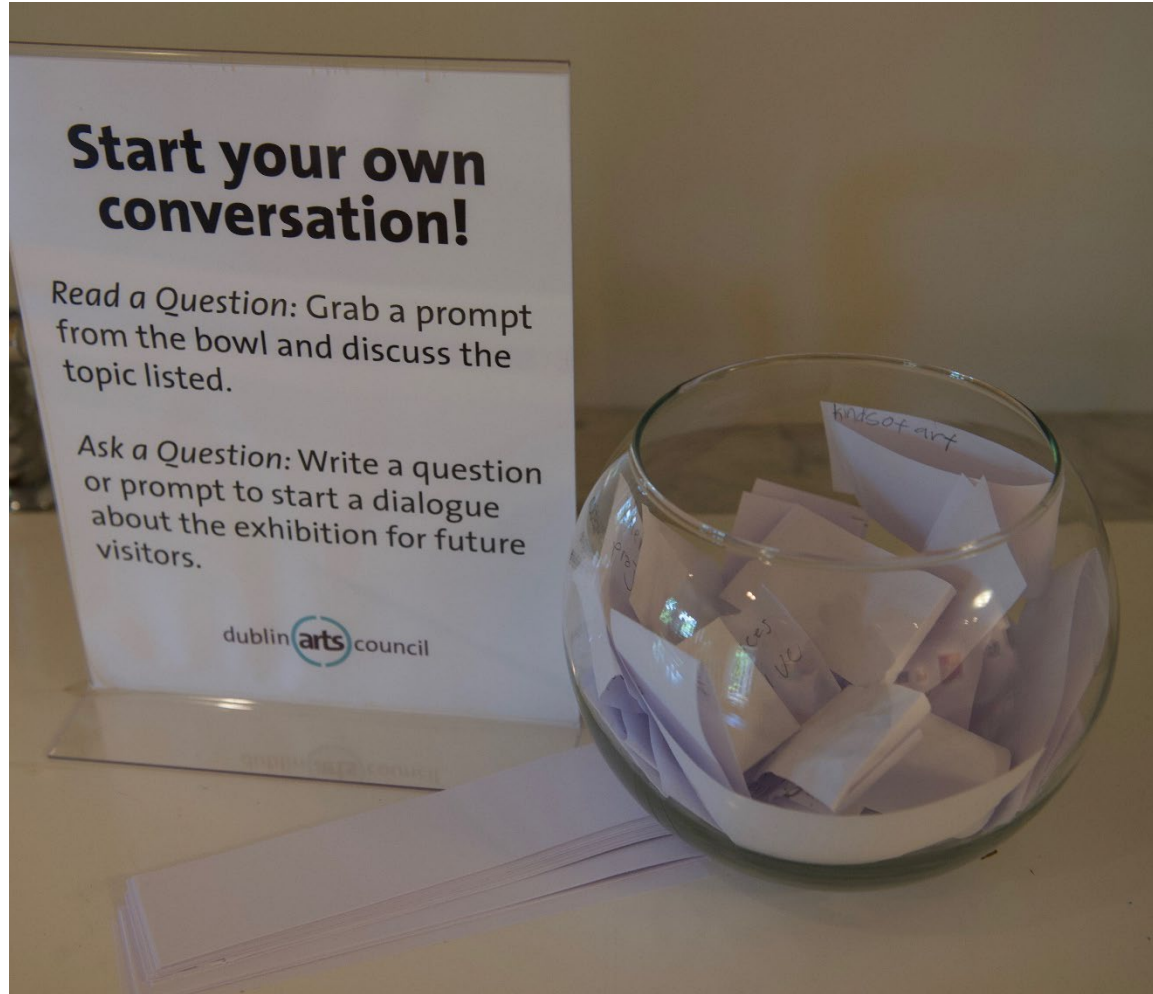
# Strategy 1: Participatory Design



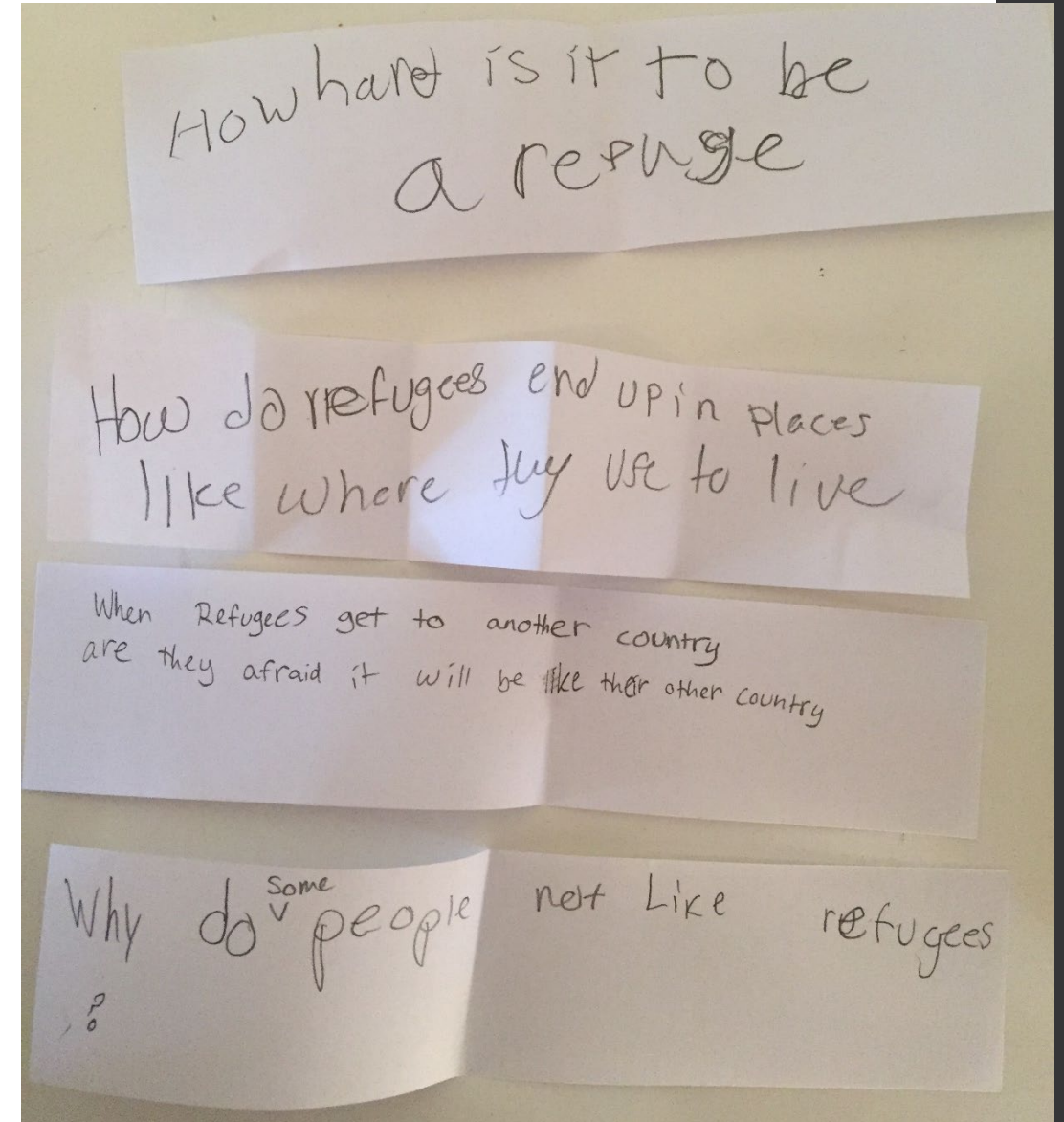
Conversation Starters: Chairs.  
Dublin Arts Council, *Crossing Borders*. 2018.



# Strategy 1: Participatory Design



Conversation Starters: Bowls.  
Dublin Arts Council, *Crossing Borders*. 2018.



# Strategy 2: New Media

## Welcome Screen

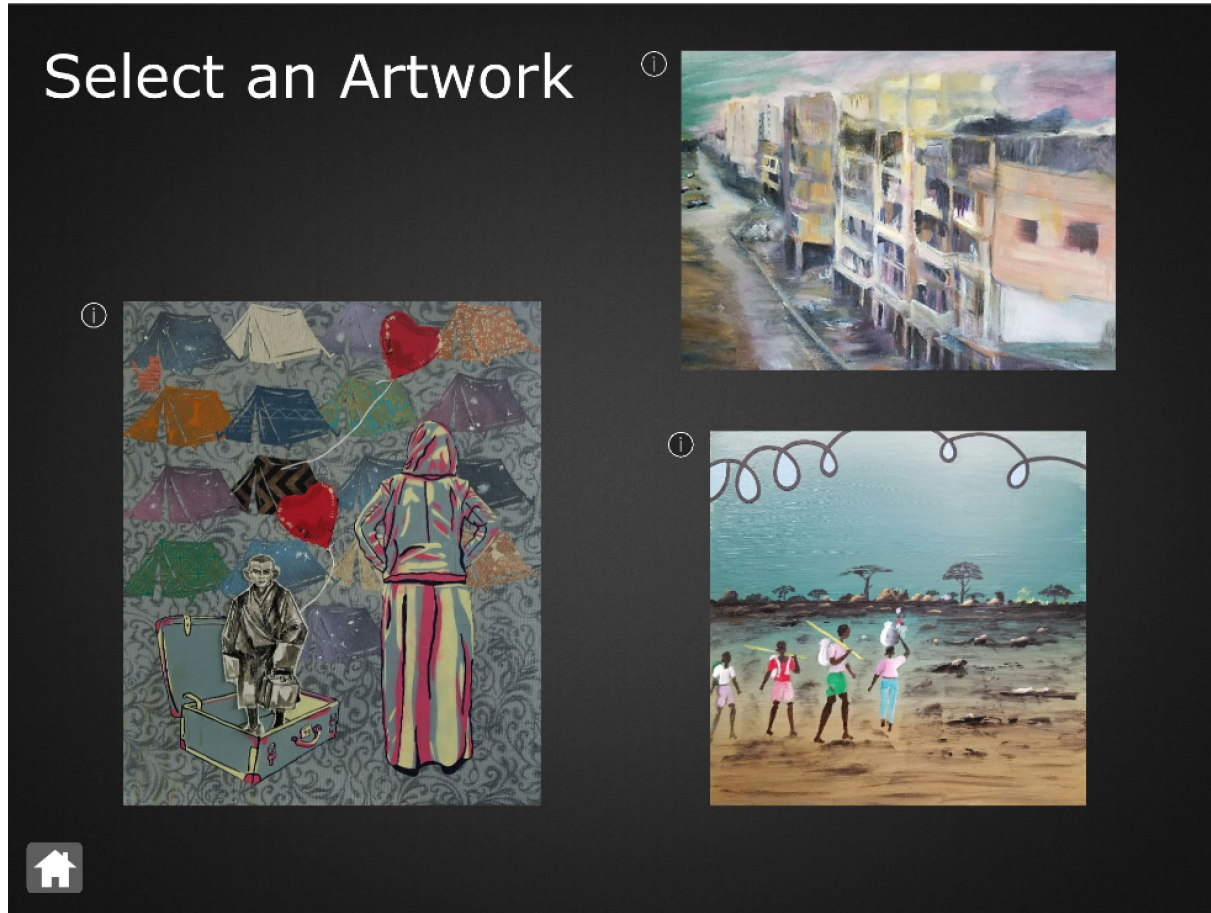


Digital Interactive: *Create, Connect, Contemplate.*  
Dublin Arts Council, *Crossing Borders.* 2018.

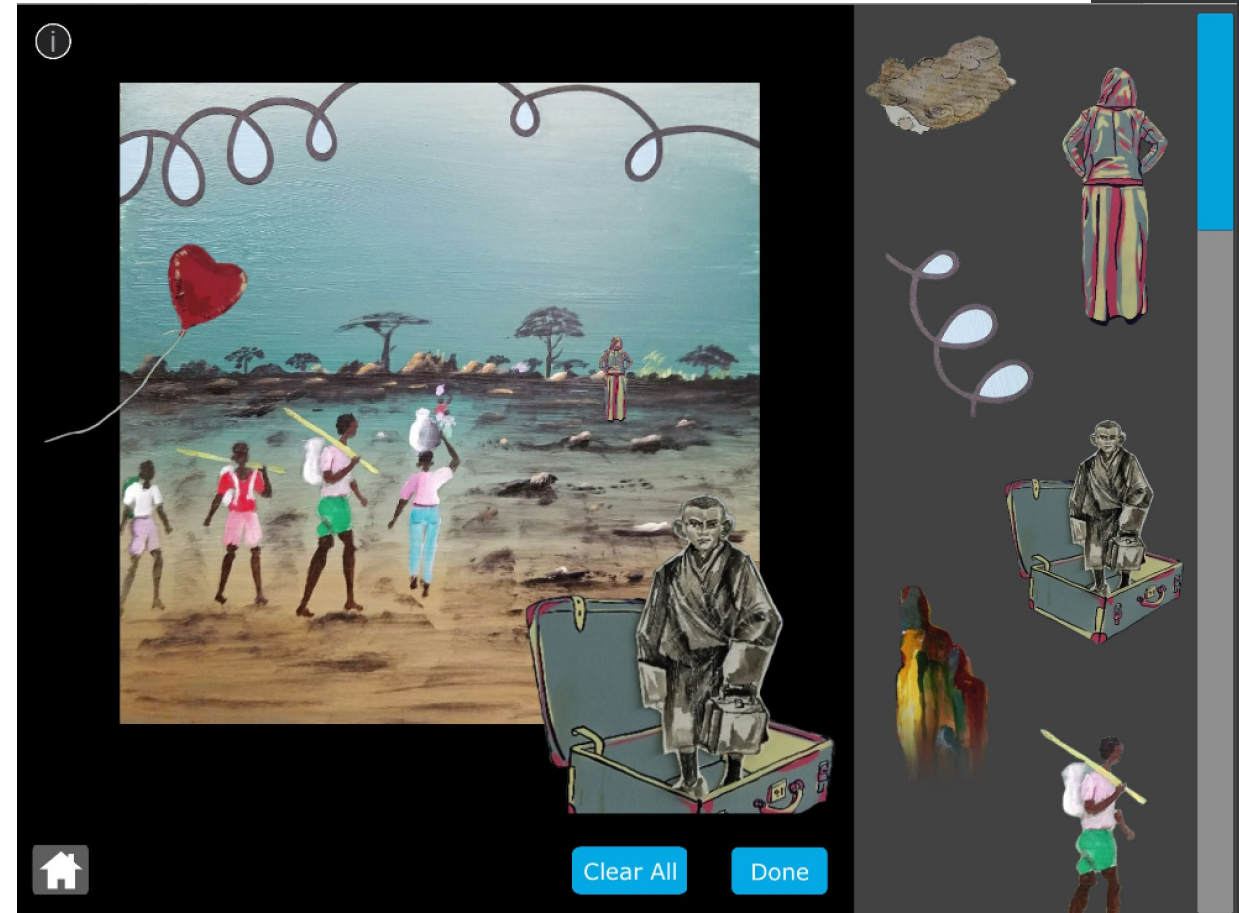


# Strategy 2: New Media

## Selection Screen



## Play Screen



Screen Shots. *Create, Connect, Contemplate.*  
Dublin Arts Council, *Crossing Borders*. 2018.



# Strategy 2: New Media

## Connect & Reflect

Question: 2/4

This activity helped me better understand the challenges and rewards of navigating an unknown space.



Next

### Dual Purpose:

1. For Participants – Reflection
2. For Institution & Project – Evaluation

## Strategy 3: Analog Interactives

*WEBS: We Each Begin Somewhere.*

Dublin Arts Council, *Crossing Borders*. 2018.





# Strategy 3: Analog Interactives

## Visitor Responses

- “Homeland - USA - Sometimes I struggle knowing that people in the world see me as inferior simply because of the melanin in my skin. However I find comfort in having a strong community of people who DON'T see me in that way.”
- “Pakistan - hard to raise children”
- “USA - struggle - Because I wear a hijab (headdress) a man moved away from me in a restaurant.”

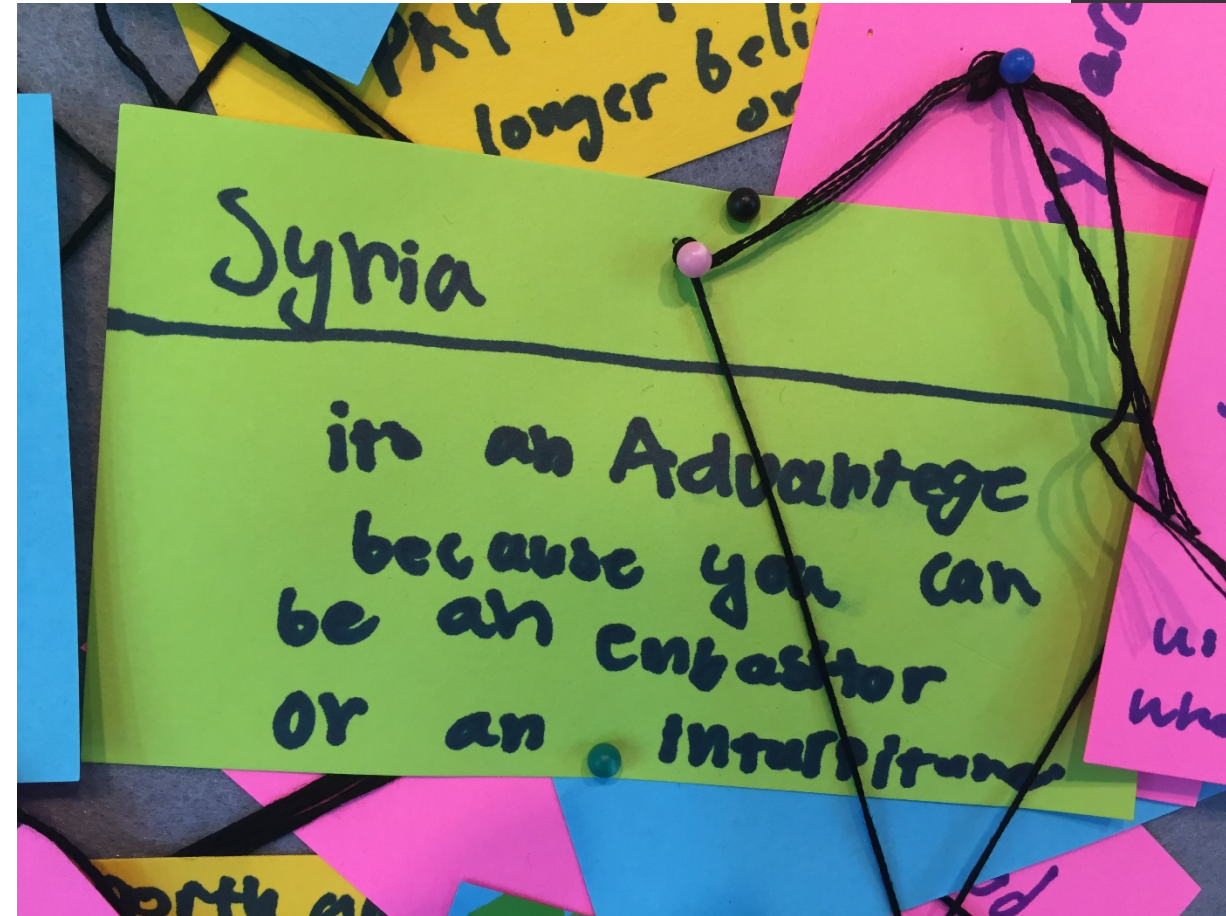


*WEBS: We Each Begin Somewhere.*  
Dublin Arts Council, *Crossing Borders*. 2018.

# Strategy 3: Analog Interactives

## Visitor Responses

- “1. Iraq 2. The way other countries treat us [like] we are nothing. But we still are humans like others! <3”
- “United States: We are the great American experiment. Even though we consistently have growing pains (many of them right now), I do believe in the power of our democracy to overcome these growing pains and remain a place of refuge in the world.”
- “U.S.A. - I have freedoms that others may not imagine.”



*WEBS: We Each Begin Somewhere.*  
Dublin Arts Council, *Crossing Borders*. 2018.

# Implications & Applications

83% agreed or strongly agreed that after viewing the exhibition, they could better empathize with the realities refugees face

- Increased empathy
- Equalize voices

77% of survey respondents found the interactives deepened their compassion for refugees

- Break down barriers
- Increased accessibility of exhibition themes



# Implications & Applications

75% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed the exhibition inspired them to learn more about the refugee experience and consider further action

→ Break down barriers  
→ Promotion of social change

86% agreed or strongly agreed that they heard from multiple perspectives in the exhibition

→ Offered multiple perspectives

# Implications & Applications

What can you do at your institution?

- Culturally-responsive language
- Multiple perspectives
- Placement & design
- Accessible
- Appropriate formats

# Thank you!

## References

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